

# TRAINING PRE-SERVICE CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHERS TO CREATE INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO TO ENHANCE CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Lih-Ching Chen Wang<sup>1</sup>, Ph.D. and Ming-Chian Ken Wang<sup>2</sup>, Ph.D.

<sup>1</sup>*Professor, Educational Technology in the Department of Curriculum and Foundations  
Director, Chinese Language Teaching Licensure Master Program, College of Education and Human Services  
Cleveland State University, 2121 Euclid Ave., JH386, Cleveland, OH 44115-2214, U.S.A.*

<sup>2</sup>*Senior Systems Administrator, Information Services & Technology  
Cleveland State University, 2121 Euclid Ave., RT1104, Cleveland, OH 44115-2214, U.S.A.*

## ABSTRACT

Foreign language instruction is a complex and challenging task made even more so by situations in which the learner's native language is radically different from the foreign language being mastered. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of native English speakers seeking to learn Mandarin Chinese. The rapid increase in the availability and sophistication of video editing has made it possible for classroom teachers to create their own instructional video materials to assist their students' learning process. The presentation will explain the advantages of doing so, and will describe the activities of one program that trains pre-service Chinese language teachers to create their own instructional video materials as part of their teaching licensure program, as well as discussing the reactions of the teachers to these activities. Samples of student-created video materials will be shared.

## KEYWORDS

Instructional video, teacher training, foreign language instruction, Chinese, curriculum

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Learning a foreign language is a challenging task made easier by a variety of technological tools. Teachers have always created their own tools from whatever materials are at hand – paper, ink, manipulatives – but 21st century video technology enables teachers to create an entirely different set of learning tools accessible to students in any location. Teacher-created video files allow teachers to preserve brief key lessons for re-use at any time. The creation of these lessons is easily done on personal computers using readily mastered skills. The presenters will discuss their experiences teaching these skills to pre-service Chinese teachers, and the reactions of these teachers when given the opportunity to use these skills and the resulting materials in their own classrooms. This is practitioner-based rather than a research-based presentation.

## 2. CONTEXT

With the increasing power of personal computers and a corresponding increase in the availability of consumer level video-editing tools has come a rise in the use of individually created video content for instructional purposes. Probably the best known example of this is Khan Academy (<https://www.khanacademy.org/>), but individual teachers in all subjects and disciplines have recognized the potential of this approach to teaching. As Berk (2009) observed, “video clips are a major resource for teaching the Net Generation and for drawing on their multiple intelligences and learning styles to increase the success of every student...The research on videos and multimedia learning provides an empirical foundation for their use in teaching, especially with introductory courses and novice learners, to increase memory, comprehension, understanding, and deeper learning.”

In fact, Berk went on to summarize 20 different positive aspects of using instructional video clips, including motivational and affective components as well as improved retention of content. Donkor (2011) found that students are highly satisfied with the video-based instructional materials. And when it comes to the teaching of foreign languages, Winke, Gass, & Sydorenko (2010) have pointed out the natural match – “Videos are a good resource for presenting native speaker voices in foreign language instruction.”

Given these advantages it seems like an obvious next step for teachers of foreign languages to be able to create their own video clips for instructional purposes. Doing so allows them to closely tailor the content and the length of the video clips to their instructional needs, and frees them from the necessity of finding the perfect content for their lessons in the midst of the massive collection of materials that is the Internet. As long ago as 2002, Hampton noted that “video editing...is a relative simple process and... it is good enough to clearly demonstrate the steps and stages for the processes required to perform the practical skill. It is relatively low cost and can be produced fairly quickly and easily.” Hampton went on to make the point that video was particularly well placed for activities requiring practice and rehearsal on the part of students, and learning a foreign language is positioned squarely in that area.

Several years ago the lead author became aware that K-12 schools in the United State of America were beginning to seek qualified teachers to teach Mandarin Chinese to their students as a foreign language. At that time, very few such teachers were available. She was instrumental in creating and securing approval for such a program. In Spring semester 2011 the program enrolled its first students. This program provides candidates with an Ohio state teaching license in Chinese. It comprises 34 credits and can be completed in four semesters. The program is one of very few initiatives in the United States that include both an M.Ed degree and licensure program, which provides a PreK-12 teaching credential. To date this degree program has a near-perfect job placement record for its graduates.

The lead author’s discipline is educational technology, which means that she spends much of her professional time preparing teachers to integrate technology into their K-12 classrooms. A central question in this field is that of how best to integrate various technologies most effectively and efficiently into learning activities and school structures, and the rate of ongoing change in information technologies means that pre-service teachers must continually update and enhance their technology skills in order to remain current and effective. She teaches pre-service Chinese teachers how to use technology to teach Chinese to native English speakers.

Students in this Chinese language teaching licensure program are trained to produce their own instructional video clips and required to make use of these clips in their field training experiences. One required course in the degree program is called “Technology in the Classroom”, and it focuses on integrating a variety of instructional technologies into pedagogical practice. Among these technologies is instructional video. The instructional video curriculum includes the instructions on how to plan, shoot, edit, and upload a brief instructional video to YouTube. The reason for the use of YouTube is that “YouTube offers fast and fun access to language and culture-based videos and instruction from all over the globe. It provides an outlet for student and teacher-created videos, and most importantly, YouTube videos provide students with an opportunity to engage meaningfully in the target language” (Terantino, 2011).

In terms of hardware used in shooting the video clip, the pre-service Chinese teachers are allowed to choose to use any digital video device to which they have access, including smartphones, iPads, Android tablets, digital video cameras, and so on. They are told that the chosen device must be capable of transferring the resulting digital file to their computers. In terms of software used in editing, the pre-service Chinese teachers are allowed to use any video editing software to which they have access, including iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, and so on. They are told that software selected should have the capability to create a file suitable for uploading to YouTube.

In addition, they were told that the final, edited video clip should successfully teach non-native Chinese speakers some specific skill or item of content. They should have a clear description of the video and a description of what the video is intended to teach. The video should contain an appropriate title slide (with a title for the video and the full name of the author) and transitions between different shots. The maximum length of the final edited video is three minutes. This echoes Hampton’s suggestion that segments of less than three minutes are ideal (Hampton, 2002).

Examples of teacher-created videos will be provided during the presentation. One teaches about Chinese New Year by accompanying a sing-along audio track of a song about New Year with video of the Chinese characters being sung. The second one teaches the characters and pronunciations of the Chinese days of the week, and the third one provides cultural information and vocabulary connected to the Chinese mid-Autumn festival.

The teachers who have completed this training have spoken very positively about the experience. One student stated "...the process made me realize how easy it is to create a video and then use it in class to help educate students on a topic." Another noted "with this video, I got a taste of what it's like to produce educational materials that can be used in a real life situation." A third observed "...this activity has been the most meaningful to me in all of my courses including undergrad and my first master's degree. I look forward to making more movies like this for my students."

### 3. CONCLUSION

Teacher-produced instructional video has many clear advantages for the foreign language classroom. The video component is motivational, appeals to multiple learning styles, and provides an easy means to expose students to the sound, structure, and content of a language as spoken by native speakers. The fact that the materials are produced by the individual teacher means that the content can be selected as a perfect fit for a given individual's curriculum, and the length of the video clips can be tailored as well. One size need not fit all.

In the area of disadvantages, it's true that producing such video clips requires a modest amount of skill and training, as well as access to video editing facilities – but all of these are increasingly common in today's world. Perhaps the more significant disadvantage is that the production values of individual classroom teachers are unlikely to be at the video professional level, and most of their productions are likely to be visibly the work of amateur producers. Perhaps this is part of their charm.

However, since this is such a promising area for further work, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge that one limitation of this presentation is the absence of formal research data. This is fertile ground, and it is our hope that additional work in this area will allow us to refine the pedagogical details of best practices for the use of such videos.

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